

Media diversity is vital for our democracy

I am appalled by the rapid consolidation of media venues under the aegis of a few companies/corporations. ANY further deregulation will set a dangerous precedent in what is beginning to look like our rapidly disappearing democracy. Since the public is just now getting word about this pending deregulation, it is critical that lengthy and wide-ranging hearings be held all over the country in very public arenas. The FCC's refusal to do this strikes at the soul of the First Amendment; if your intent is to strike fear into the hearts of American citizens, you have succeeded.

Thus, regarding Docket No. 02-277, the Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules, I urge to retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

It is my observation that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative affects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. While there may be indeed be more SOURCES of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more and more limited-frighteningly so.

Our forefathers believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge, our ability to have open, informed discussion with a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised. The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules in question in this proceeding. The right to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events is a critical part of the founding philosophy of our nation.

In addition to the official hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA, we need the FCC to hold additional hearings elsewhere around the nation to solicit the widest possible participation from the public which will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. Please listen to the views and needs of citizens with a social and/or civic interest, not solely to the financial concerns of the companies who are the only beneficiaries of the proposed deregulation.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is incumbent on the Commission to take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Thank you,

Hadley Fitzgerald